

continue talks with our House colleagues on legislation that can bring gas prices down. There are several options we can take.

Now, there is a growing consensus that the Federal Government—especially the FTC—should investigate possible price gouging and price manipulation, market manipulation, that might be happening among the largest oil and gas companies in the country. This is one step we are working on out of many.

Of course, any solution involving the FTC requires that the FTC have full membership to begin with, so we are also going to keep working to confirm Mr. Bedoya as the fifth FTC Commissioner to break the 2-2 deadlock that has lasted for over a year.

It is important to note that Republicans unanimously are not voting for Mr. Bedoya, and that has paralyzed the FTC, even though its leadership would love to go after the price gouging and market manipulation. We have a few Members absent because of health issues this week, but I want to be clear that health issues will not deter us from getting Mr. Bedoya and other important nominees, like Lisa Cook, confirmed.

I urge any Republican who is truly worried about rising gas prices to drop their senseless objection to getting Mr. Bedoya confirmed. It seems it is only covering up for the oil companies and preventing a really sharp, piercing investigation of market manipulation and price gouging. There is something deeply wrong about seeing the largest oil companies, while raking record profits, asking Americans to pay more at the pump. That is why we need an FTC with full membership, so it can look under the hood of America's energy sector and drill down into why Big Oil is pumping out record profits as consumers struggle.

Again, I repeat to my Republican colleagues: If you care about lowering gas prices and care about looking at what the large companies—oligopolies—are doing, join us in voting Mr. Bedoya on the FTC. A vote against him is a vote for Big Oil and against the American driver and consumer.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Madam President, now on student debt, for over a year, one of my top priorities as majority leader has been urging President Biden to cancel \$50,000 in student debt for each student loan borrower. Right now, as discussions continue within the administration about the future of student debt, I again call on the President to take action, which he can do on his own, and hit the financial reset button for millions and millions of Americans.

President Biden has done the right thing by continuing the moratorium on student loan payments. His actions have saved millions from financial ruin during the COVID crisis. But borrowers don't just need their debts paused; they need them erased. These extensions have been crucial, but borrowers can't

indefinitely plan out their financial futures 3 months at a time with the fear hanging over them that payments would resume down the line.

With the flick of a pen, President Biden could provide millions upon millions of student loan borrowers a new lease on life. He can do it without congressional action, because we know so many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are opposed to it. He can do it without congressional action.

It is the right thing to do for our country. For generations, higher education has been a ladder up into getting into the middle class, especially for Black, Latino, and Asian Americans. Unfortunately, student debt has become not a ladder up but an anchor down, weighing Americans down. It makes it harder for borrowers to start a family, to buy a home or a car or live with financial independence.

For borrowers of color, the anxieties are magnified, often tenfold. Take this for example: The White median borrower would only owe an average of 6 percent of their student loans 20 years after starting college. Meanwhile, the median Black borrower would still owe a staggering 95 percent of their student loan debt in that same time span. Imagine being closer to retirement than to college and realizing you have only made a dent in your student loans. Millions of borrowers of color—millions more borrowers in general—live with this reality.

Once again, borrowers don't need their debts paused; they need them erased. This isn't just the right thing to do for our economy; it is the right thing to do for racial equity. I will keep urging the President to take this important step.

I will say to my colleagues, I think the President is moving in the right direction. My talks with him and the staff have been very fruitful over the last little while, and I am hopeful that he will do the right thing. We are getting closer. We are getting closer.

UKRAINE AND COVID

Madam President, on Ukraine and COVID funding, in the immediate future, there are two different issues that demand swift and bipartisan action from the U.S. Senate: passing another Ukraine supplemental package and approving another round of COVID funding.

In the coming days, the President is expected to send to Congress his request for action on Ukraine. We are going to make passing Ukraine funding a priority in the Senate, and I expect both sides to work together. As we have seen over the last 2 months, American support has gone a long way in helping the Ukrainian people resist and even push back against Putin's savage and immoral war, but the fight is far from over.

The Ukrainian people are fighting for survival in a contest that is very much about democracy versus tyranny. There should be no question—no question whatsoever—about which side

America stands on. We have a moral obligation—a moral obligation—to give the Ukrainian people the tools they need for as long as they need them. For this reason, I expect both sides to work in the same bipartisan way we did a few months ago to get the Ukrainian supplemental done.

We also need bipartisan cooperation as soon as we can to pass another round of COVID health funding. I urge my Republican colleagues to work with us to pass COVID funding ASAP. It is very risky for the health of the American people for Republicans to play political games at a time when we need more health funding.

Let's be clear. This is an exceedingly time-sensitive priority. According to the White House, countries like Japan and Vietnam and the Philippines are already ahead of the United States in placing orders for treatment, for medications, for vaccines. The United States is largely unable to follow suit simply because Senate Republicans have blocked any new round of funding required to make these purchases.

The longer Senate Republicans hold out on supporting new COVID funding, the greater the risk of other nations buying out all of the available supplies of vaccines and tests and lifesaving therapeutics. If they run out, it will take manufacturers months to make new doses.

So, again, to my Republican colleagues, work with us to pass COVID funding ASAP. Our country can't afford delays or political games that stand in the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I, along with others, had the opportunity to say goodbye to Madeleine Albright this morning—a truly remarkable life: first woman Secretary of State, a remarkable diplomat, and a friend. We had an opportunity to bond over an issue I am about to discuss: the people of Burma and the plight that they have had to endure over the years. Regretfully, as her life came to an end, things did not go in the right direction in Burma—at least not yet. I know she would not have given up hope; nor have I.

BURMA

Madam President, with regard to the current situation in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi was handed yet another outrageous, sham sentence by the military junta in Burma.